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# THE WAR AND THE WAY OUT

BY  
G. LOWES DICKINSON

LONDON :

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTES

**I**N a speech delivered at Dublin, on September 25th, 1914, the Prime Minister expressed in the following terms his view as to what the outcome of the war ought to be :—" I should like, if I might for a moment, beyond this inquiry into causes and motives, to ask your attention and that of my fellow countrymen to the end which in this war we ought to keep in view. Forty-four years ago, at the time of the war of 1870, Mr. Gladstone used these words. He said ' The greatest triumph of our time will be the enthronement of the idea of public right as the governing idea of European politics.' Nearly fifty years have passed. Little progress it seems has yet been made towards that good and beneficent change, but it seems to me to be now at this moment as good a definition as we can have of our European policy. The idea of public right, what does it mean when translated into concrete terms? It means first and foremost the clearing of the ground by the definite repudiation of militarism as the governing factor in the relation of States, and of the future moulding of the European world. It means next that room must



be found and kept for the independent existence and the free development of the smaller nationalities—each with a corporate consciousness of its own.

“Belgium, Holland, and Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, Greece, and the Balkan States, they must be recognised as having exactly as good a title as their more powerful neighbours—more powerful in strength as in wealth—exactly as good a title to a place in the sun. And it means, finally, or it ought to mean, perhaps by a slow and gradual process, the substitution for force, for the clash of competing ambition, for grouping and alliances and a precarious equipoise, the substitution for all these things of a real European partnership, based on the recognition of equal right and established and enforced by a common will. A year ago that would have sounded like a Utopian idea. It is probably one that may not or will not be realised either to-day or to-morrow. If and when this war is decided in favour of the Allies, it will at once come within the range, and before long within the grasp, of European statesmanship.”

This pamphlet is a reasoned argument in favour of the Prime Minister's proposals. If it is “Utopian” it is, at any rate, not more Utopian than he is. And for that reason, among others, I venture to ask from the reader his serious attention.



# The War and the Way Out.

To put myself right with the reader at the outset, I begin by stating that this pamphlet is not a "stop the war" pamphlet. Being in this war, I think, as all Englishmen think, that we must go on fighting until we can emerge from it with our territory and security intact, and with the future peace of Europe assured, so far as human wisdom can assure it. Nor do I here discuss the question whether or no it was necessary for us to enter into the war. Nor whether the direct and immediate responsibility for it rests mainly with Austria, Germany, or Russia. My point is a different one. I believe that this war, like all wars for many centuries in Europe, was brought about by Governments, without the connivance and against the desires and the interests of peoples; that it is a calamity to civilisation unequalled, unexampled, perhaps irremediable; and that the only good that can come out of it would be a clearer comprehension by ordinary men and women of how wars are brought about, and a determination on their part to put a stop to them. If anyone, having read so far, is clear that he has no interest in this point of view, or that he is hostile to it, I hope that he will throw the book aside. For it is not an exercise in dialectics or a theme for exasperated argu-

ment. It is an act performed in what I believe to be the interest of civilisation; and it is meant to bear fruit. I am suggesting a way in which Europe may be saved in the future from such wars as that in which we are involved. It is a way not for England alone, but for all countries, and it is only possible if all countries accept it. But for the moment it is only Englishmen I can address. I address them, to the best of my ability, without prejudice, without sophistry, and without rhetoric. My intention is not to carry away, but to convince; and I ask the reader only to give me a hearing and to judge for himself. For on that individual judgment of his, on its clearness, its tenacity, its conviction, will depend his contribution to the future of civilisation. Public opinion has weight only in proportion to the number of convinced individuals who compose it. And public opinion alone can save what is to be saved of Europe, when this cataclysm has passed by.

The position I intend to put forward and defend is this: War is made—this war has been made—not by any necessity of nature, any law beyond human control, any fate to which men must passively bow; it is made because certain men who have immediate power over other men are possessed by a certain theory. Sometimes they are fully conscious of this theory. More often, perhaps, it works in them unconsciously. But it is there, the dominating influence in international politics. I shall call it the governmental theory, because it is among governing persons—emperors, kings, ministers, and their diplomatic and military advisers—that its influence is most conspicuous and most

disastrous. But it is supported also by historians, journalists, and publicists, and it is only too readily adopted by the ordinary man, when he turns from the real things he knows and habitually handles to consider the unknown field of foreign affairs. Very briefly, and, therefore, crudely expressed, the theory is this: "The world is divided, politically, into States. These States are a kind of abstract Beings, distinct from the men, women and children who inhabit them. They are in perpetual and inevitable antagonism to one another; and though they may group themselves in alliances, that can be only for temporary purposes to meet some other alliance or single Power. For States are bound by a moral or physical obligation to expand indefinitely each at the cost of the others. They are natural enemies, they always have been so, and they always will be; and force is the only arbiter between them. That being so, War is an eternal necessity. As a necessity, it should be accepted, if not welcomed, by all sound-thinking and right-feeling men. Pacifists are men at once weak and dangerous. They deny a fact as fundamental as any of the facts of the natural world. And their influence, if they have any, can only be disastrous to their State in its ceaseless and inevitable contest with other States."

Stated thus briefly, and in its most uncompromising terms, this is what I have called the governmental theory. I propose to criticise it in detail. But before doing so, I will ask the reader to compare with it the ordinary attitude of the plain men and women who inhabit these States and who have to bear the burden of the wars in which the theory involves them. These



ordinary people, in the course of their daily lives, do not think at all in terms of the State. They think about the people they come in contact with, about their business, their friends, and their families. When they come across foreigners, as many of them do, in business or in travel, they may like or dislike them, but they do not regard them as predestined enemies. On the contrary, if they are intelligent, they know themselves to be co-operating with them in innumerable complicated ways, implying mutual advantage. Differences of language and of social habit make it easier for most people to associate with their fellow-countrymen than with foreigners. But that is all. There are, of course, among these men and women, real enmities and spontaneous quarrels. But these do not occur because men belong to different States. They occur because they really have injured one another, or hate one another. And they occur, naturally, for the most part, between men of the same State, because it is these that most often come into direct contact with one another. It is not, therefore, these enmities of ordinary men that give rise to wars. Wars are made by governments, acting under the influence of the governmental theory. And of this fact—for a fact it is among civilised Western peoples in modern times—no better example could be given than the present war. Before it broke out nobody outside governmental and journalistic circles was expecting it. Nobody desired it. And though, now that it is being waged, all the nations concerned are passionately interested in it, and all believe themselves to be fighting in a righteous cause, yet no ordinary citizen, in the days preceding its out-

break, would have maintained that there was any good reason for war, and few even knew what the reasons alleged were or might be. Even now the different nations have quite opposite views as to which Government was responsible. We believe it was the German Government; and with equal conviction Germans believe it was the British. But nobody believes that it was the mass of the people in any nation. The millions who are carrying on the war, at the cost of incalculable suffering, would never have made it if the decision had rested with them. That is the one indisputable fact. How can such a fact occur? How is it possible for governments to drag into war peoples who did not desire war and who have no quarrel with one another?

The immediate answer is simple enough. In no country is there any effective control by the people over foreign policy. That is clear in the case of the great military empires. But it is true also of France and of England, where, in other respects, Government is more or less under popular control. The country has no real choice, for it only gets its information after the decisive action has been taken. That is an important truth which ought to lead to important changes in our methods of conducting foreign affairs. But it is only part of the truth. For we have now to notice this further fact, that in all countries, in Germany no less than in England and France, no sooner is the war declared than it is supported by the whole nation. The voice of criticism is silenced, and everyone, whatever his opinion about the origin of the war, gives his help to see it through. Why is that? The reason is obvious. As soon as war is made, the people of one country, con-

scious, just before, of no cause of enmity, do really become enemies of the people of another country; for armed populations are marching on armed populations to massacre them. Everybody, therefore, is bound to fight in self-defence. It is too late to ask whether there was any real cause of quarrel; for, quarrel or no, there is real and imminent danger. To meet that danger becomes, therefore, the immediate necessity which overbears every other consideration. And that is the deepest reason why wars made by governments without, and even against, the will of peoples, will always be supported by peoples.

But though that is the most powerful reason, it is not the only one. There is a further fact. The ordinary man, though he does not live under the obsession of the governmental theory, is not protected against it by any knowledge or reflection. As far as he is concerned, he knows no reason for war, and, left to himself, would never make it. But he has a blank mind open to suggestion; and he has passions and instincts which it is easy to enlist on the side of the governmental theory. He has been busy all his life; and he has no education, or one that is worse than none, about those issues which, in a crisis like that which has come upon us, suddenly reveal themselves as the issues of life and death. History, no doubt, should have informed him. But history, for the most part, is written without intelligence or conviction. It is mere narrative, devoid of instruction, and seasoned, if at all, by some trivial, habitual, and second-hand prejudice of the author. History has never been understood, though it has often been misunderstood. To understand it is perhaps be-



yond the power of the human intellect. But the attempt even has hardly begun to be made. Deprived, then, of this source of enlightenment, the ordinary man falls back upon the Press. But the Press is either an agent of the very governments it should exist to criticise (it is so notoriously and admittedly on the Continent, and, to an extent which we cannot measure, also in this country). Or, it is (with a few honourable exceptions) an instrument to make money for certain individuals or syndicates. But the easiest way to make money by the Press is to appeal to the most facile emotions and the most superficial ideas of the reader. And these can easily be made to respond to the suggestion that this or that foreign State is our natural and inevitable enemy. The strong instincts of pugnacity and self-approbation, the nobler sentiment of patriotism, a vague and unanalysed impression of the course of history, these and other factors combine to produce this result. And the irony is that they may be directed indifferently against any State. A hundred years ago it was France; sixty years ago it was Russia; thirty years ago it was France again; now it is Germany; presently, if governments have their way, it will be Russia again. The Foreign Offices and the Press do with nations what they like. And they will continue to do so, until ordinary people acquire right ideas and a machinery to make them effective. To contribute to that result is the object of this pamphlet. I propose to show, first, that the governmental theory is false; secondly, that a settlement of Europe is desirable and possible which will make that theory impotent in future. I now proceed to the first of these points.

The governmental theory holds that States are the great realities, and that they are natural enemies. My reply is that States are unreal abstractions; that the reality is the men and women and children who are the members of the States; and that as soon as you substitute real people for the abstract idea that symbolises them you find that they have no cause of quarrel, no interests or desires of a kind which justify or necessitate aggressive war. And, if there were no aggressive war, there could, of course, be no cause for defensive war. I shall try to show this in detail, taking as my illustrations the principal points which are said to underlie and justify the present war. I will begin with an example sufficiently removed from immediate English concern for us to be able to examine it without prejudice. Let us take the relations of the German and Russian Governments and the German and Russian peoples in the present war. The official case of the German Government, as laid before the Reichstag, puts it that they were driven into this war by Russian aggression. Russia was preparing to attack them; so, in self-defence, they were obliged to attack Russia. On the other hand, the official case of the Russian Government states that Austria-Hungary, supported by Germany, was preparing to attack Russia, and that Russia was acting in self-defence. Whichever of these views may be the true one, it is certain that it was aggression, or fear of aggression, by Russia against the German Powers, or by the German Powers against Russia, that brought on the war. Now, to the governmental mind, this appears as an inevitable conflict. It is labelled "the conflict of Slav and Teuton,"

and is the theme of many learned lucubrations. But why should there be a conflict of Slav and Teuton? And what is there inevitable about it? If all that is meant be that, as a matter of fact, the Russian Government was intending to attack the German Government, or the German Government to attack the Russian, that is merely to accept my contention that Governments make war without rhyme or reason. But what is meant is, of course, something more than this. It is meant that there are certain vital interests of the peoples of Germany and of Russia which Governments understand but peoples do not, and for which it is worth while to go to war. What can these be?

Let me quote from an author who has acquired in this country a deserved and sinister reputation, and who is a master of the theory and practice of the governmental mind. "The requirements of the mighty Empire," so General Bernhardt writes of Russia, "irresistibly compel an expansion towards the sea, whether in the Far East, where it hopes to gain ice-free harbours, or in the direction of the Mediterranean, where the Crescent still glitters on the dome of St. Sophia. After a successful war, Russia would hardly hesitate to seize the mouth of the Vistula, at the possession of which she has long aimed, and thus to strengthen appreciably her position in the Baltic. Supremacy in the Balkan Peninsula, free entrance into the Mediterranean, and a strong position on the Baltic, are the goals to which the European policy of Russia has long been directed. She feels herself also the leading Power of the Slavonic races, and has for many



years been busy in encouraging and extending the spread of this element into Central Europe.”

Let us take it from General Bernhardt—I think we may safely do so—that these really are the purposes of the Russian Government. Those which concern the Far East let us leave aside, for they bring Russia into conflict with the English, the Chinese, and the Japanese, rather than with Germany. Let us take the points that immediately concern the German Powers. Russia, we are told, wants to acquire the mouth of the Vistula. I have no doubt she does. She has, I am told on good authority, actually published in her official organ her intention to take the whole shore of the Baltic up to and including the Kiel Canal, if, by the help of French and English arms, she is victorious in this war. It is that danger that Germany fears, and, so far as Russia is concerned, I believe Germany to be on the defensive. Let us admit, then, that this is the aim of the Russian Government, entangled in the traditional idea that the Russian State is a Being demanding expansion of territory. Now let us turn to look at the Russian people. The immense mass of these are peasants living in villages as they have lived from time immemorial. They have one interest, and one only, the land. To own sufficient land, to live on it in comfort, to work on it free from interruption and free from extortion, to continue in their traditional routine, that and that only is what they want. They probably do not know, most of them, what and where the Baltic is. They have probably, most of them, never met a German. If they did meet one, they would probably feel the antagonism all ignorant and inexperienced men

feel for strangers who cannot speak their language. But what interest have these peasants in the acquisition of the coast of the Baltic? How would they be better off? Do they want to colonise it? Not at all. The region of colonisation for Russia is the vast, almost uninhabited territory of the East. No Russian peasant would be the happier, the richer, the better, if the Russian Government fulfilled its ambition on the Baltic. Yet, that it may fulfil that ambition, they have been torn from their homes by millions, leaving the harvest unreaped, leaving their accustomed work upon the soil of their fathers, leaving weeping wives and starving children, to kill and to be killed by men of whom they have never heard, and in whom they have no interest either to hate or to love them, men living in countries of which they know and care nothing, men who on their part have no quarrel with them and no wish to attack them. And all this they are to do, and are doing, because a few men of the military and diplomatic caste have a theory about States, their interests, and their destinies.

But the peasants are ignorant men! True, they are almost the whole of the population of Russia. True, they compose almost the whole of the army. True, upon them falls almost the whole of the loss and the suffering. But they are ignorant men! They do not count! Let us turn, then, to the intellectual class. What about these brilliant men and women, known to us through a literature unequalled in the annals of mankind for its poignancy, its subtlety, its breadth, its profundity? What about the intellectuals? Is it the Baltic they are thinking of? Is it the Balkan Peninsula? No! Since

there has been in Russia a class of thinkers and of writers that class has given all its energy to destroy the power and discredit the ideas of the Russian Government. Persecuted with a horror of persecution of which Englishmen can form but the palest image (for such experiences lie outside our ken), exiled, imprisoned, tortured, by hundreds and by thousands, they have never ceased to protest, in season and out of season, against the whole conception of the State which animates the soulless bureaucracy of Russia.

Shall I be told that, in spite of all this, the Russian people have an interest in the acquisition by the Russian Government of the coast of the Baltic, because they will then be in a position to send ships of war safely and easily into the North Sea? Yes, indeed! If somewhere in the North Sea, or beyond, there are ships of war bent on destroying Russian ships and Russian trade. But why should there be, except that some other Government, possessed by the same illusion of power, wants to expand at the cost of Russia? And we have only to begin our argument over again against that Government and its aims and ideas. It is, indeed, the very irony of the whole situation, that every Government will protest that it is innocent, it is harmless, it has no ambitions contrary to the interest of any other State; but that these other States have ambitions contrary to its own. Every Government, we are told, is on its defence—against another Government on its defence! Was ever folly so disastrous? Or else hypocrisy so base?

What has been said of the Baltic applies equally to the Balkans, the other cause of the war between Russia



and the German Powers. Here both Austria and Russia wish to predominate. That was the immediate cause of this war. And here, too, so far as mere power and expansion is concerned, no plain man or woman in either country will be the better for success in such a cause, or the worse for defeat. But here there comes in another factor, deeper and more capable of making a genuine appeal to real people. The Balkan States have been for centuries an example, the most salient and the most terrible, of the results of that policy of expansion and conquest which dominates the governmental mind. The Turks have maintained for centuries in those unhappy lands the rule of Hell. No law has been known but the law of force. And the peoples subjected to that law have accepted it as their own. The expulsion of the Turks has meant only the application of the methods of the Turks by each nationality to every other. But now, among the inhabitants of these States are a number of Serbs, and Serbs are Slavs, racially akin to the Russians; and some of these Serbs, those included in Bosnia and Herzegovina, have been brought by force, in the usual way and on the usual principle, into the Austrian Empire. The Russian Government desires to bring these Serbs into its own system. And that desire brings it into conflict with the Austrian Government. Now, in this conflict, no doubt, both Governments are moved only by the ordinary superstition of the governmental mind. But it is possible that, in issues like this, the people of a country may be inspired by a genuine interest of an ideal kind. The Austrian people, of course, cannot feel this, for there are not, in the Balkan States, any Germans or Hungarians oppressed by other

Powers. But some Russians, of those that are educated, intelligent, and sympathetic, may feel inclined to support their Government in a policy which can be represented as aiming at the deliverance of people of a kindred race from the oppression of an alien Government. That such an appeal may be genuinely felt and genuinely responded to, those of my readers will understand who remember on what grounds we were invited to intervene by force in South Africa, and what a response, not all unreal and hypocritical, that appeal evoked among us. Some Russians, therefore, outside governmental circles, may think, and think sincerely, that an interest of an ideal kind requires them to go to war with Austria to help Serbia.

But now, mark ! This situation has arisen because Austria has incorporated against their will some of these Serbs in her Empire, and desires to incorporate the rest. And, further, because the Russian Government is not aiming merely at the deliverance of the Serbs, but at their incorporation in her own system. That races with a natural homogeneity, desirous to govern themselves, should be allowed to do so without interference, is a real interest of peoples, and one which the new statecraft of Europe must recognise. But that principle, honestly applied in the Balkans, could never lead to war between Austria and Russia. For the true solution, on that principle, would be a referendum to the Slav peoples included in the Austrian Empire on the point whether they wish to remain under Austria or to join Serbia, or to come as a separate unit into a Balkan federation. And nothing prevents this solution, except the fact that Governments are possessed by

false ideas and bad ambitions. We come, thus, once more up against the conception of the abstract State over-riding the true aims, interests and ideals of peoples. That, and that only, has caused this war. That, and that only, will cause future wars.

There remains the point of the possession of Constantinople. Russia is supposed to aim at this, and for many years British policy aimed at thwarting her. But why did, or does, Russia want Constantinople? And what interest have we in the matter? So far as I have ever been able to learn the interest here is purely a war interest. Russia wants to be able to send war ships through the Dardanelles. We, and some other Powers, object, for fear her ships should threaten our possessions. It is the old obsession again, that States are natural enemies. For all purposes of trade, for all peace purposes, the Dardanelles are open, and it is the interest of all nations alike that they should remain so. But no real interest of any people would be served by the possession of Constantinople, once the supposed war interest is set aside. At every point we come up against the same illusion. Everywhere and always, fear in every State of aggression on the part of every other. And never any reason for the aggression feared that can be stated in terms of the true values of human life.

Let us turn now from the situation between the German Powers and Russia to the situation between Germany and France. Behind this is a long history, and it is, as always, a history of the aggression of the State. The perpetual and futile wars, so disastrous to France, which occupy the reign of Louis XIV, were

wars to secure for the French State the hegemony of Europe. They had no reference to any real interests of the French people; and they left that people, after years of unsuccessful struggle, decimated and exhausted. The enterprise was taken up again by Napoleon. It failed again; but if it had succeeded, no advantage would have accrued to the French people. They would have been neither wealthier, healthier, nor happier; and no one can say they would have been better, except those who hold—as General Bernhardt and his followers hold, but as, I hope, no Englishman holds—that the arrogant temper of a dominant race is a good thing in itself, and worth wasting, to secure it, the lives, the fortunes and the happiness of millions. The years went on, and during the period from 1859 to 1866 the first great steps were made towards German union. The German State had come into being; and instantly the French State took the alarm. To the governmental mind, on either side of the frontier, the greatness and prosperity of the one people involved the ruin of the other. War became what is called inevitable; and both Governments manœuvred for it. It duly came; the French were crushed; Alsace and Lorraine were taken from them; and there began another period of preparation for another war. During that period new ideas penetrated the French people. They became more and more what is contemptuously called “pacifist”; that is to say, they began consciously to care for the real interests of civilisation, for social justice, for science, for art, and for a religion that should worship some other god than the God of War. Similar influences and tendencies became predominant in all



other countries, and especially among the great mass of the German people, represented by the Social Democrats. But the philosophy of the State remained unchanged. The idea of dominating Europe obsessed the governing caste in Germany. The French, in fear, only too well justified, of what might happen, made alliance with a Power as military as Germany, and as alien to all the purposes for which France has fought through a century of revolutions. This unnatural alliance is the main root of the tragedy in which we are involved. For it was that which brought France into the war, and that which brought in England. But, observe, what was really responsible for all this was the obsession of the governmental mind. That the German State, being great, must become greater, at the cost of the French State; that the French State, having been weakened, must strengthen itself again at the cost of the German State; these are the presuppositions of the conflict. And so long as those presuppositions are held by the few men who have power to determine policy, so long they are and will be a menace to peace and a menace to civilisation. But, once more, they have nothing to do with the real interests, desires or convictions of the millions of Germans and the millions of Frenchmen. Ask any of these men who, without a word of warning, have been torn suddenly from their homes, their occupations, their friends, and wives and children, whether they would choose, if the decision rested with them, to sacrifice all that they hold dear and to destroy, so far as in them lies, all that is held dear by all the people of a neighbouring nation, in order to aggrandise the French or the German State—ask them this, and what answer

would you get? But it is not so that the matter is presented to them. "March," they are told, "in defence of your homes and your dear ones." What! And those against whom they are to march are marching also to defend theirs! What ghastly irony is this! What net, woven not by Fate, but by human folly and illusion! And let us not idly think that that folly and that illusion lies all at the door of one Government. It lies with all Governments, and it lies with every man who holds the governmental theory and thinks with the governmental mind.

I pass, lastly, to the relation between Germany and England. It is the same story. Germany is great; the British Empire is great; there is not room for them both; and therefore one of them must smash the other. That is the main position; the rest is a question of choosing the appropriate moment. Such, for many years past, has been the attitude of British and of German Imperialists. I do not propose to attempt the idle and hopeless task of apportioning the blame between them. That, if it can be done at all, will be better done by one who does not belong to either nation. I will only reiterate that no Englishman and no German has any interest, material or ideal, in the destruction of the Empire of the other.

Let me illustrate; and if, in so doing, I take as my text the ambitions of the German rather than of the British Government, that is not because I hold the latter innocent. I believe it to be true that, as Germans complain, at every point we have thrown ourselves across their enterprises, under the influence of jealousy and fear. But our ambition being satiated by the

acquisition in the past of more territory than we well know how to handle, we have been acting on the defensive. It is from German not from British ambition that the conflict has arisen; German ambition, of course, being now precisely what British ambition has been in the past. The German Government, then, is credited with the intention to gain a Colonial Empire at our cost. Why, let us inquire. What interests of German men and women are to be served by this policy? We are told by the advocates of a Colonial policy in Germany that Germans who emigrate settle in non-German countries and are "lost" to the German State. Well, what of it? What does that matter to the Germans who go abroad, and who find themselves so much at home in the new country of their choice that the second generation of Germans in America are more American than the Americans, and the second generation of Germans in England more English than the English? And what does it matter to the Germans who remain at home? Are they less happy, less prosperous, less cultured, less good, less German? The question answers itself. Or will it be said that the Germans at home are poorer because other Germans go to America instead of to German Colonies? I cannot here touch upon the economic arguments which have been so ably developed in recent years by Mr. Norman Angell. If he and his followers cannot convince the reader that, from an economic point of view, the prosperity of one nation implies and enhances that of another, and that political power is a consideration irrelevant to economic power, I cannot hope to convince him. But I will put this point. It has been

held, apparently, by the German imperialists that it is worth while to go to war with us in order to acquire colonies. Have they ever tried to balance the cost of war against the supposed advantage to trade? Have they ever tried to strike the economic balance? Has the governmental mind anywhere ever made such an attempt? And is there the smallest presumption that, if it were made, the balance would be in favour of war? That, however, after all, is but the smallest point. What may be gained or lost in war economically—and I believe that all competent judges would agree that the loss must exceed the gain—is but one and the least important consideration. To go to war to gain wealth, even if you could gain it, is like murdering a man to pick his pockets. To the governmental mind, with its cynicism, its blindness, its lack of touch with realities, such a procedure may seem right and normal. But go to the plain man and woman, and put it to them in time of peace: “Would you think it right to sacrifice lives by tens of thousands and to leave to the world a legacy of hate in order that you or your descendants may gain wealth,” and what answer will you get? Go to them in time of war, say to the mother weeping for her son, say to the wife weeping for her husband, “We asked of you this sacrifice that Englishmen or Germans may have more money to spend”—what answer will you get? Yet that, and that only, is what you can say, you who make war for the sake of trade. Yes! and the same people will be accusing pacifists of sordid materialism! Reader, will you laugh or will you weep?



There remains, however, another possible plea for the seizure of colonies by force. The possession, it may be urged, of dominions beyond the seas, inhabited by a population of a lower stage of culture, gives to a people a larger horizon, a nobler task, than can be supplied by domestic activities. And a strong and growing nation should not consent to be deprived of this outlet for its energies. That there may be some truth in this view of colonial dominions I am not concerned to deny. The possession of their Indian dependencies by the British and the Dutch has set those nations many difficult problems which, after many discreditable failures, they have partially solved. Some fine men in both countries have found in such work opportunity for their talents. But, speaking as an Englishman, I have never been able to see that the English national consciousness, the habitual state of mind of the ordinary citizens, and even of the ordinary politicians, is affected, one way or the other, by the possession of India. The nation lives, and always has lived, in profound ignorance of and indifference to the problems of Indian government. They rarely raise in Parliament even the most perfunctory debate. To the mass of the people they are utterly unknown and utterly uninteresting. And, if we lost India to-morrow, I do not believe there would be any perceptible change, after the first shock, in our national consciousness. Even, however, if the possession of foreign dominions really made more difference than I believe it does to what may be called the spiritual life of a nation, and even if that difference were all to the good—an immense assumption—will it be maintained that it is

justifiable for one State to go to war with another in order to deprive that State of this kind of activity and appropriate it to itself? The governmental mind, no doubt, will answer this question in the affirmative. But ask the individual German, man or woman, those who carry on the life of the country, who create its wealth and sustain its culture, ask them, one by one, in their calm and sane moments, what they think of plunging Europe into war in order to appropriate territory now British, and what will these, the real people who have to bear the brunt of war, reply? The proposition is, in fact, to all plain sense, to all simple human feeling, preposterous. To none but the governmental mind could it appear self-evident.

But I shall be told, and this especially by Germans—for there are some absurdities the English do not allow themselves—the “culture” of a nation depends upon its political power. The larger the Empire, the better its science, its literature, its art and, I suppose it will be added, the purer its religion. This is, in fact, the contention of General Bernhardi in his notorious book. Yet it is the plain fact that, alike in religion, in literature, in art, in philosophy, in everything except science, whatever has done honour to the German name was produced before there was a Germany; and that since 1870 the prestige, the influence and the value of German culture has declined. What German names stand so high as those of Luther, Kant, Goethe, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven? And was Germany an empire when these men lived and worked? General Bernhardi quotes again and again in the course of his book, and as though he were quoting a supporter, the

works of that Goethe whom I, too, put among the greatest of mankind. But what was Goethe? A poet who passed all his long life at a tiny German court, in a Germany divided against itself; a poet so notoriously indifferent to politics, to nationality, to war, that German patriots, from that time to this, have sought excuses in vain for his attitude in the war of liberation; a man who was so good a European that he could not be a good German, and who made no attempt to conceal his admiration of Napoleon, at the moment when all Germany was prostrate at his feet. This is the General's witness to the truth that great literature is founded on great political power! On the same view, the literature, the philosophy, the art of Rome must have been greater than that of Greece! The idea of the State must be hard put to it indeed if it is to such arguments that it has recourse!

And when one turns to science the argument is even more absurd. No nation has done greater service to science than the German. And the world of science, which is cosmopolitan, not national, gladly and freely recognises it. But does anyone, knowing anything of the conditions of scientific work, suppose that that work would not have been done by Germans unless there had been a German Empire? To state the notion is to refute it. A man of science may be a patriot, but his patriotism has nothing to do with his science. He goes to learn where he can learn best, and to work where he can work best; and the result of his work is a treasure not for his country alone but for mankind. Nothing that is included under what the Germans call "culture" is or can be developed or enhanced

by the pursuit of political dominion. Those influences spread by imitation and contact, regardless of the country of their origin or of its place in the system of States. What German dramatist of our time has, or deserves, a reputation equal to that of Ibsen, the citizen of politically insignificant Norway? What German critic can stand beside the Dane Brandes? What German saint of the last century ranks with that Rabin-dranath Tagore whose country is subject to an alien domination? Indeed, if religion be taken as the test, it may be questioned whether between that and Empire there is not, in the nature of things, a sheer antagonism. Between Christianity and Empire that is so, beyond all question. General Bernhardt purports to be a Christian. I will not argue the point with him. But if there should come that last reckoning in which he must be supposed to believe, and if he, with the others who have made this war, should stand before the judgment seat of Christ, I would wish to see the look that would be turned upon them then by the man who died on the cross to bring peace to mankind.

I have dwelt upon this point of culture at greater length than its plausibility merits, because it is the kind of point that appeals to generous minds who are revolted otherwise by the sheer brutality of the governmental attitude. But it is all relevant to my main contention. Culture in that wide sense in which the Germans use the word, in the sense of the intellectual, æsthetic and spiritual life, is not only an interest of real men and women, it is their main interest. Everything else exists for the sake of it. But it has nothing to do with the State, as the governmental mind con-



ceives it. No aggrandisement of the State can help it, no diminution of it can hinder. Government may or may not wisely foster it; but the extension of political power, with or without war, cannot foster it. Here, too, and in this highest field, the supposed interest of the State and the real interests of men and women stand out of all relation to one another. And a war waged in defence of culture is even more preposterous than a war waged in the pursuit of wealth.

But there remains yet one point which the reader may expect me to deal with. The expansion of a State, it may be urged, does not, it is true, imply the expansion of its culture; but it does imply the expansion of its political system. And if anyone holds the political system of his State to be better than that of other States he is right to will the expansion of his State, even by war. It is on these lines that the existence and extension of the British Empire is sometimes justified; and on the same grounds, it may be assumed, some Germans would justify the extension of theirs. This view is less brutally selfish than most of the views which attempt to defend conquest. But, as applied to the case we are considering, the colonial rivalry of Germany and England, it has no relevance. For no sane and instructed German can really suppose that German administrative methods are so much better than British that it would be good for hundreds of millions of British Indians, or of native Africans, to be transferred by force, at the cost of a bloody war, from British to German rule. And if—which I do not for a moment believe—any German has supposed that

any British dominion was crying out for German deliverance from British tyranny, the events of the last few weeks must have undeceived him. What India wants is more self-government, not an exchange of masters. What the great native protectorates and colonies in Africa need is sympathetic and skilled administration in the interest of the natives. And this, to put it moderately, they are at least as likely to obtain from the British, with their long experience, as from the untried methods of Germany. As to the self-governing dominions they do not enter into this question. They are, and intend to remain, self-governing. And I do not suppose that even the wildest advocate of German expansion ever dreamt that Germany could germanise them. There is no sense in the notion that, at this stage in the world's history, any part of the world now under British control could benefit by a transference to German control. What every people needs is self-government, as and when it becomes capable of it. And that cause is the last that is likely to be served by the present German Government and its present methods.

Look at it, then, which way we will, we find no justification for the supposed policy of the German Government to create a colonial dominion at the cost of the British Empire. This may be said without making any arrogant pretensions about that Empire, without idealising it, without justifying the methods by which it was acquired. With all that controversy I am not now concerned. I am concerned only to press home what I believe to be the unassailable contention that the German people have no interest in the supposed

policy of their Government to create a colonial empire at the cost of the British by war.

But equally I do not believe that the English people have any interest in thwarting the expansion of Germany where it can be obtained without war and is likely to extend the general interest of civilisation. It does not appear that our Foreign Office can be held guiltless of doing this. But all such action rests on the superstition I am combating—the superstition of the State, expanding by an inevitable law, at the cost of other States, by means of war. That, and that alone, on both sides, is the bottom of the rivalry between Germany and England. And that is simply an illusion.

I have now reviewed, as fully as is possible within the limits of a pamphlet, the main causes which, according to the governmental theory, may be held to have necessitated and to justify the present war. It is nothing to the purpose to reply that the English are fighting a defensive war, for every nation says the same, and with the same conviction. Somewhere, everybody admits, there must have been aggression, though everybody puts it in a different place. And wherever there has been aggression it has been due to the governmental theory possessing the minds of rulers and statesmen, and imposed by them, by suggestion, persuasion or otherwise, upon ordinary men. I ask the reader to consider very seriously what I have laid before him, and to extend and apply it further for himself, whenever and wherever he is met by the kind of arguments I have been endeavouring to refute. For until he has convinced himself that the causes which make war do not lie in the nature of things, and need

not persist, he will not take seriously proposals for drastic remedies. And it is only with a view to those remedies that I have written these pages. I am asking the reader not merely to condemn the past—let the dead bury their dead!—but to help to mould the future. And, believe me, it can only be moulded to any good purpose if we, the plain people, men and women, workers with their hands and workers with their brains, in this country and in all countries, get together and say to the people who have led us into this catastrophe, and who will lead us into such again and again: “No more! No more! And never again! You rulers, you soldiers, you diplomats, you who through all the long agony of history have conducted the destinies of mankind and conducted them to hell, we do now repudiate you. Our labour and our blood have been at your disposal. They shall be so no more. You shall not make the peace as you have made the war. The Europe that shall come out of this war shall be *our* Europe. And it shall be one in which it shall be impossible that ever again there shall be a European war.”

Let us turn, then, from the past to the future and ask, first, what the governmental mind, left to itself, is likely to make of Europe when the war is finished; secondly, what we, on our part, want and mean to make of it. What the diplomats will make of it is written large on every page of history. Again and again they have “settled” Europe, and always in such a way as to leave roots for the growth of new wars. For always they have settled it from the point of view of States, instead of from the point of view of human



life. How one "Power" may be aggrandised and another curtailed, how the spoils may be divided among the victors, how the "balance" may be arranged, these kinds of considerations and these alone have influenced their minds. The desires of peoples, the interests of peoples, that sense of nationality which is as real a thing as the State is fictitious, to all that they have been indifferent. Take, as an example, the settlement made by the diplomats a hundred years ago, after the Napoleonic wars. What did they do? They forced back on France the dynasty whose works and whose ideas the revolution had been made to destroy, and involved her in a century of civil strife. They put back Italy under the heel of Austria and necessitated the wars of 1859 and 1866. They re-imposed upon Spain the infamous régime of the Bourbons and the priests, and opened there too the long vista of civil war. They united Belgium with Holland in defiance of racial distinction, and Sweden with Norway in defiance of history. Everywhere they left unhealed wounds, unnatural conjunctions, reactionary tyrants in power, and peoples divided, broken, and enslaved. With the result that their house of cards had hardly been completed when it began to collapse; and the history of the nineteenth century is one continuous record of internal revolution and international war. What such men have done before be assured they will do again. They work still with the same conceptions. They are as barren as ever of imagination, of humanity, of sense for real life. What the issue of this war may be at this moment of my writing no one can foresee.

But what can be foreseen with certainty is, that if the peace is to be made by the same men who made the war it will be so made that in another quarter of a century there will be another war on as gigantic a scale.

Let us suppose that the German Powers win. We know well enough what kind of peace they will impose, for they have been at no pains to conceal their ambitions. "France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path." So General Bernhardt, voicing, it may be presumed, the policy of the military caste that is master of Germany. The same, of course, applies to England. We shall be shorn of our empire, of our command of the seas, of all that the German State has envied and hated in the British State. Italy and the Balkans will be pillaged to the benefit of Austria, and Russia rolled back (though that would be all to the good) from her ambition to expand in the west. At the same time every democratic movement in every country will be discouraged or annihilated. The principle of a brutal military domination will be established as the principle of Europe. The countries that are not militarist will become so. And another period of armed peace will begin in which every genuine interest of civilisation, all the true life of men and women, will be sacrificed to the desperate effort of the defeated nations to recover their position, and of the victorious ones to maintain theirs.

If, on the other hand, we and our allies should win, the outlook is no more promising, if the diplomats are to have their way. We, in that case, shall endeavour finally to crush the German Powers, as they are

determined finally to crush us. The English and the French will divide the German colonies. Russia will dominate the Balkans, and probably appropriate Constantinople, and a great slice of German territory. And France and England will be left face to face with what they will regard as the new menace of the Slav. With the result that, in another quarter of a century, or less, they will combine with their present enemies to resist the advance of their present ally. In either case, the state of Europe will be the old bad state: the piling up of armaments, at the cost of the continued poverty and degradation of the mass of the people, the destruction of all hope and effort towards radical social reform, and, when the time comes, as in this case it infallibly will, the new war, the new massacre, the new impoverishment, the perpetual and intolerable agony of a civilisation for ever struggling to the light, for ever flung back by its own stupidity and wickedness into the hell in which at this moment it is writhing. Lord, how long, how long?

Till such time as we, the plain people, say we will endure it no longer. And let that time be now! When this war is over Europe might be settled, then and there, if the peoples willed it, and made their will effective, in such a way that there would never again be a European war. To do this it is only necessary to change our ideas. Or, rather, to make clear to ourselves the ideas we really have, the purposes we really will, and impose them on those who are to act for us. We will to perpetuate European peace. How are we to accomplish it? By keeping in view and putting into effect certain clear principles.

First, the whole idea of aggrandising one nation and humiliating another must be set aside. What we are aiming at is not that this or that group of States should dominate the others; but that none should in future have any desire or motive to dominate. With that view, we must leave behind the fewest possible sores, the least possible sense of grievance, the least possible humiliation. The defeated States, therefore, must not be dismembered in the hope of making or keeping them weak; and that means, in detail, that, if the Allies win, the English and the French must not take the German colonies, nor the Russians the Baltic coast, the Balkans, or Constantinople; and that, if Germany wins, she must not dismember or subordinate to her system either France or England or the neutral Powers. That is the first clear condition of the future peace of Europe.

Secondly, in rearranging the boundaries of States—and clearly they must be rearranged—one point, and one only, must be kept in mind: to give to all peoples suffering and protesting under alien rule the right to decide whether they will become an autonomous unit, or will join the political system of some other nation. Thus, for example, the people of Alsace-Lorraine should be allowed to choose whether they will remain under Germany, or become an autonomous community, or be included in France. The same principle should be applied to the Poles. The same to Schleswig-Holstein. The same to the Balkan States. The same to the Slav communities included in Austria-Hungary. There would arise, of course, difficulties in carrying this principle through. For, in the Balkan States, in Bohemia, and elsewhere, there is an almost inextric-



able tangle of nationalities. But with good will these difficulties could be at least partially met. Even the wholesale transference of peoples of one nationality from one location to another is a possibility; and indeed it is now going on. In any case, the principle itself is clear. Political rule must cease to be imposed on peoples against their will in the supposed interest of that great idol, the abstract State. Let the Germans, who belong together, live together under the same government, pursuing in independence their national ideal and their national culture. But let them not impose that ideal and that culture on reluctant Poles and Slavs and Danes. So, too, let Russia develop her own life over the huge territory where Russians live. But let her not impose that life on unwilling Poles and Finns. We English, in history, have been as guilty as other nations of sacrificing nationality to the supposed exigencies of the State. But of late we have been learning our lesson. Let us learn it to the end. Let no community be coerced under British rule that wants to be self-governing. We have had the courage, though late, to apply this principle to South Africa and Ireland. There remains our greatest act of courage and wisdom—to apply it to India.

A Europe thus rearranged, as it might be at the peace, on a basis of nationality instead of on a basis of States, would be a Europe ripe for a permanent league. And by such a league only, in my judgment, can its future peace, prosperity, happiness, goodness, and greatness be assured. There must be an end to the waste upon armaments of resources too scanty, at the best, to give to all men and women in all countries the

material basis for a good life. But if States are left with the power to arm against one another they will do so, each asserting, and perhaps with truth, that it is arming in defence against the imagined aggression of the others. If all are arming, all will spend progressively more and more on their armaments, for each will be afraid of being outstripped by the others. This circle is fatal, as we have seen to demonstration in the last quarter of a century. To secure the peace of Europe the peoples of Europe must hand over their armaments, and the use of them, for any purpose except internal police, to an international authority. This authority must determine what force is required for Europe as a whole, acting as a whole in the still possible case of war against Powers not belonging to the league. It must apportion the quota of armaments between the different nations according to their wealth, population, resources, and geographical position. And it, and it alone, must carry on, and carry on in public, negotiations with Powers outside the League. All disputes that may arise between members of the League must be settled by judicial process. And none of the forces of the League must be available for purposes of aggression by any member against any other.

With such a League of Europe constituted, the problem of reduction of armaments would be automatically solved. Whatever force a united Europe might suppose itself to require for possible defence would clearly be far less than the sum of the existing armaments of the separate States. Immense resources would be set free for the general purposes of civilisation, and especially for those costly social reforms on

the accomplishment of which depends the right of any nation to call itself civilised at all. And if any one insists on looking at the settlement from the point of view of material advantage—and that point of view will and must be taken—it may be urged, without a shadow of doubt, that any and every nation, the conquerors no less than the conquered, would gain from a reduction of armaments far more than they could possibly gain by pecuniary indemnities or cessions of territory which would leave every nation still arming against the others with a view to a future squandering of resources in another great war. This is sheer common sense of the most matter-of-fact kind. A League of Europe is not Utopia. It is sound business.

Such a League, it is true, could hardly come into being immediately at the peace. There must be preparation of opinion first; and not less important, there must be such changes in the government of the monarchic States as will ensure the control of their policy by popular opinion; otherwise, we might get a League in which the preponderating influence would be with autocratic emperors. But in making peace the future League must be kept in view. Everything must be done that will further it, and nothing that will hinder it. And what would hinder it most would be a peace by which either there should be a return to the conditions before the war—but of that there is little fear; or by which any one Power, or group of Powers, should be given a hegemony over the others. For that would mean a future war for the rehabilitation of the vanquished. The mood, therefore, which seems to be growing in this country—that we must “punish”

Germany by annihilating her as a political force; the mood which seems to be growing in Germany, that she must annihilate us, as the great disturber of the peace; all such moods must be resolutely discouraged. For on those lines no permanent peace can be made. Militarism must be destroyed not only in Germany but everywhere. Limitation of armaments must be general, not imposed only on the vanquished by victors who propose themselves to remain fully armed. The view of peoples must be substituted once for all for the view of governments; and the view of peoples is no domination, and, therefore, no war, but a union of nations developing freely on their own lines, and settling all disputes by arbitration.

I have thus laid before the reader, as clearly as I can in a brief space, both what I believe to be the deepest cause of war, and what I believe to be its only cure. At this moment it is only Englishmen that can be addressed in this sense, for on the Continent there is martial law, and every man, Socialists and Pacifists as much as others, is at the front. But, of course, the opinion that can influence the result must be international. And that such weight of international opinion can be elicited and made effective in a short time, as soon as agitation can begin, I myself have little doubt. The considerations I have laid before the reader, if they be as valid and important as I believe them to be, are valid and important for everyone, irrespective of nationality. What is imperative is to get them stated in such a way that they come home with real conviction to a vast number of individuals. This paper of mine is but a forerunner of what I hope will be a



general and active propaganda. But the only end and purpose of all such propaganda is to produce a quiet, firm, unassailable conviction, in one after another individual mind, heart, and will. For the moment, the voice is mine and the listener that one person who at any moment, in any place, may peruse these lines. I do not aim at sweeping him away by frothy rhetoric. I appeal to his common sense, his reason, his conscience, and his heart. And I ask him, whoever he be, labourer with the hand, labourer with the head, man of business or thinker, Conservative or Liberal or Socialist, to make up his mind for himself in the terrible and lurid glare of the events actually passing before him. I ask him first to realise what war means. If he has been at the front, he knows from personal experience. Let him realise, again and again, without ceasing, till it is burnt upon his soul, what that experience has been. If he has not, let him try to realise it through such detailed accounts of what has been happening as filter through the Press. Then when the horror has possessed his soul, let him ask himself, Why all this? And let him not be put off and satisfied by such answers as "the invasion of Belgium," "the ambition of Germany." These may be causes why England went into this particular war. They are not causes why the war happened. The war happened because the governmental theory was held and applied by those few men who control policy and armaments; and because the ordinary people, whom this war is massacring and ruining by hundreds of thousands, had neither the knowledge, nor the education of heart and mind, nor the organisation, to control

those men. That is what we have to alter. And we must begin by discrediting the governmental theory. I have endeavoured to show, by examples relevant to this war, how the reasons it puts forward break down in the light of mere common sense and mere decent human feeling. Let the reader practise and pursue that method in dealing with every book and every press article he comes across in which the fallacy is maintained. Let him ask himself always, when there is talk of Power, of Prestige, of Markets, of Expansion, of all the other shibboleths, what exactly do these things mean in terms of the life of men and women. And if sometimes he detects among the objects aimed at by Governments one that seems to imply a real benefit to real people, let him then ask himself, "Is it tolerable for a decent human being to pursue this advantage at the cost of other human beings, by means of War, as War has now been freshly and vividly revealed to me?" If he perseveres in this course I believe he will come to agree with me that the world is being controlled by men who are the victims of sheer illusion; whether it be defect of mind, of heart, or of soul that has fastened the illusion upon them. And then, if he gets so far, let him ask the further and crucial question, How is it that such men, victims of illusion, have been able to involve all of us, millions and millions of us, in universal massacre; to waste our labour on instruments of destruction; to keep us starved of spiritual, even of material sustenance, that they may pile up armaments and wage war for no purposes relevant to life at all? He will then have come to the point at which action for him begins. For then he must get

together with all others who think and feel as he does, not in England only, but everywhere throughout the world, to stop this thing by any and every means. For, let him remember, the power rulers have is the power of the assent of the ruled, an assent almost always purely passive. That passive assent on his part must stop. He is an active soldier now in the cause of peace.

## POSTSCRIPT

The following form of petition has been drawn up to be signed by those who are in favour of a peace settlement on the lines advocated in Mr. Asquith's Dublin speech and in this pamphlet. **Forms for signature may be obtained from the Secretary, The Civil Union, 47, Victoria Street, London, S.W.**

*To the Right Hon. HERBERT HENRY ASQUITH, a Member of His Britannic Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, D.C.L., LL.D., K.C., M.P., Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury.*

SIR,

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED subjects of His Britannic Majesty, in view of the fact that a state of war exists between the Governments of His Britannic Majesty and his Allies and the Governments of the Empires of Germany and Austria-Hungary, wish to record our sincere conviction that, whilst peace will not be restored to Europe until the Governments of His Britannic Majesty and his Allies are successful, in order to render that peace permanent and lasting the terms must be settled in accordance with the principles set out hereunder



AND WE THEREFORE RESPECTFULLY URGE that in negotiating terms of peace His Britannic Majesty's Government should aim at securing :

1. NATIONALITY—That the claims of nationality be respected in all cases ; that national boundaries coincide as far as possible with national sentiment ; and that no territory be annexed or retained against the will of its inhabitants.
2. EUROPEAN PARTNERSHIP—That a real European partnership be substituted for the system of dividing nations into rival groups and alliances, and that an undertaking be entered into that all future differences shall be settled by rational methods instead of by war.
3. REDUCTION OF ALL ARMAMENTS—That the treaty shall include an agreement for the drastic reduction of armaments.

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